United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service

Notice of Proposed Action

Mt. Rose Corridor Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project

View of Mt. Rose Highway and surrounding areas. Photo from Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe webcam.

Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest

Carson Ranger District

May 2021

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Introduction

The Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest (HTNF) is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) addressing hazardous fuels reduction and vegetation management activities on National Forest System (NFS) lands in Washoe County, Nevada. This notice of proposed action (NOPA) provides project background, the need for action, a summary of pertinent management direction, and a description of the proposed action. Release of this NOPA initiates the opportunity for public comment. The purpose of this comment period is to solicit comments that will help refine the scope of the issues to be addressed in the EA, identify resource protection measures to be included in the proposed action, and frame the analysis of effects.

This project is being completed under the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) of 2003. Section 102 (a) of the HFRA authorizes hazardous fuels reduction projects on: (a) Federal land in wildland-urban interface areas or Federal lands in condition class three or condition class two within fire regimes I, II or II, in such proximity to a municipal water supply system or a stream feeding such a system within a municipal watershed that a significant risk exists that a fire disturbance event would have adverse effects on the water quality of the municipal water supply or the maintenance of the system, including a risk to water quality posed by erosion following such a fire disturbance event.

The opportunity to comment meets the Forest Service's notice and comment requirements, which are part of the pre-decisional objection process (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 218). This will be your opportunity to comment if you want to establish eligibility to object to the draft decision that will be released following completion of this National Environmental Policy Act review. See "How to Submit Comments" near the end of this document for instructions.

Background

The project area is located southwest of Reno, Nevada, in Washoe County. The legal description for the entire project analysis area is Township 16 and 17 North, Range 18 and 19 East, multiple sections, Mount Diablo Meridian. The elevational range for the project analysis area is 5,100 feet near Bower's Mansion Regional Park in Washoe Valley to 9,600 feet near the Mt. Rose Ski Resort. Figure 1 below is a vicinity map of the project area.

The Mt. Rose Corridor Hazardous Fuels Reduction Project would focus on the reduction of wildland fuels through implementation of and forest management treatments on National Forest lands identified in the Carson Range Multi-Jurisdictional Fuel Reduction and Wildfire Prevention Strategy (Update 2018). Additional benefits of this project would be improving forest health, increasing resistance and resilience, as well as improving wildlife habitat viability and connectivity. The analysis area is comprised primarily of conifer, shrubland, riparian, and grassland areas.

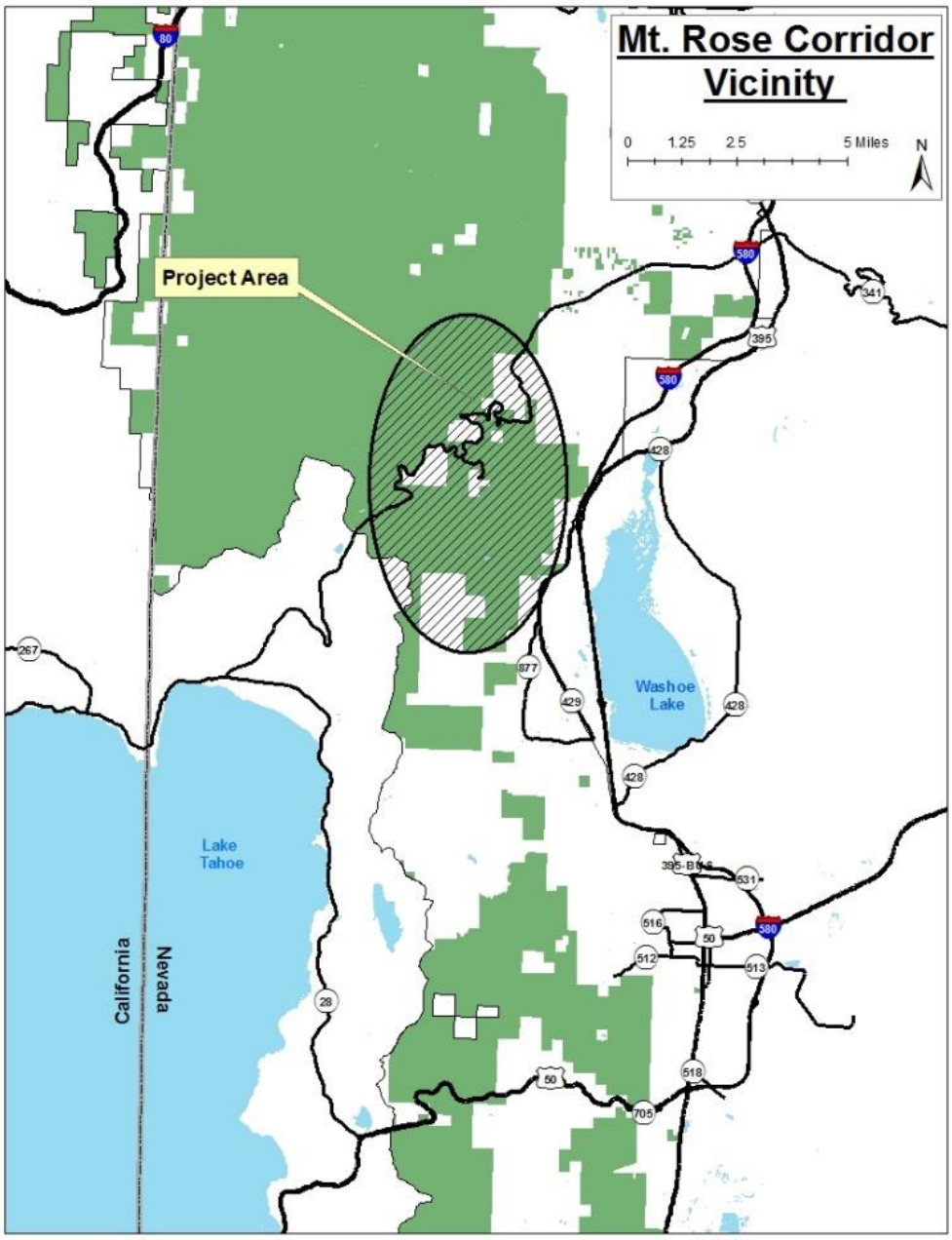

Figure 1: Project vicinity map

Fire exclusion, primarily through fire suppression during the majority of the 20th century, has had far reaching effects to fire-dependent ecosystems throughout the western United States. The vegetation communities that occur near the wildland urban interface within the project area were historically thinned and fuel loading was reduced through frequent, low intensity fires that occurred every 6 to 30 years (LandFire data). Figure 2 (below) shows the range of average fire return intervals within this project area.

Without naturally occurring fire, or some type of substitute disturbance, the stand structure and composition of the lower elevations of this project area have been altered, leading to high fuel loading in areas, creating the potential for abnormal impacts to the area in the event of a wildland fire. These

abnormal impacts could include fire size, fire intensity, and fire severity. The vegetation communities found in the upper elevations of this project area have longer fire return intervals, but those areas have also been altered through fire suppression and a changing climate, leading to a need for forest management activities throughout the elevation range of this project area.

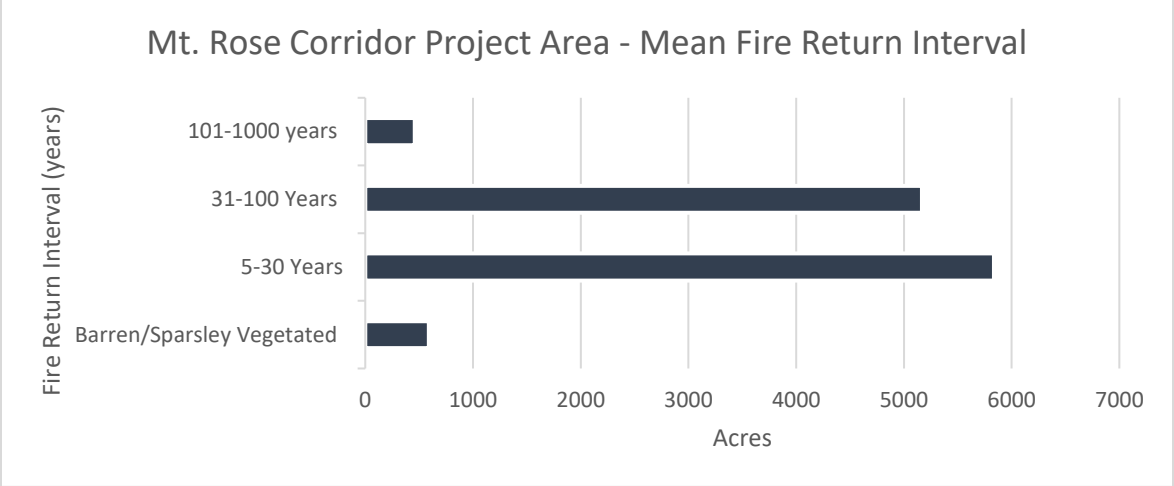

Figure 2: Mean Fire Return Interval within Mt. Rose Corridor Project Area.

Need for Action

As wildfires throughout the western United States grow in magnitude, frequency, duration, and severity, the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest is focusing on increasing the scale of management actions to anticipate and mitigate these amplified fire effects. Management actions, including mechanical fuels reduction and prescribed fire, need to be planned and implemented to address the increase in wildfire magnitude and severity.

The purpose of this project is to:

- Reduce hazardous fuels to provide for defensible areas in order to control and/or suppress future wildland fires.
- Improve forested conditions in the greater Mt. Rose Highway Corridor to increase forest resistance and resiliency to disturbance.
- Protect wildlife habitat and overall watershed function from the potential impacts of high intensity wildfire.
- Maintain previously implemented vegetation treatments to increase and prolong their viability of effectiveness.

Management Direction

The Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (USDA 2004) and the Toiyabe National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA 1986) provide Forest direction as well as management goals and objectives to manage the risks of catastrophic wildfire.

Management Goals:

Goals for fire and fuels management include reducing threats to communities and wildlife habitat from large, severe wildfires and re-introducing fire into fire-adapted ecosystems. Broad-scale goals include:

- treating fuels in a manner that significantly reduces wildland fire intensity and rate of spread, thereby contributing to more effective fire suppression and fewer acres burned;
- treating hazardous fuels in a cost-efficient manner to maximize program effectiveness; and
- actively restoring fire-adapted ecosystems by making demonstrated progress in moving acres out of unnaturally dense conditions (in other words, moving acres from vegetation condition class (VCC) 2 or 3 to condition class 1). (SNFP ROD 2004, p.34)

There is a need to manage hazardous fuels in the Mt. Rose Highway corridor, with strategic placement of treatments across broad landscapes to modify wildland fire behavior. Goals for fuels treatments include:

- strategically placing treatment areas across the landscape in order to interrupt potential fire spread,
- connect existing implementation that's taken place in the past,
- preparing treated areas to cause a fire to burn at lower intensities and slower rates of spread compared to untreated areas, and
- designing treatments to maximize the number of acres that can be treated under a limited budget (SNFP ROD 2004, p. 34).
- Public benefits will exceed costs (TNF LRMP 1086 p.IV-4).

Desired Condition

The proposed action will assist in developing a more sustainable ecosystem and address the future needs of the varying ecosystems within in the identified project area.

Desired conditions identified in the Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA) include the following:

- Open stands dominated primarily by larger, fire tolerant trees.
- Surface and ladder fuel conditions are such that crown fire ignition is highly unlikely.
- The openness and discontinuity of crown fuels, both horizontally and vertically, result in very low probability of sustained crown fuels.

Following completion of all activities, including hand thinning, and/or mastication, and/or prescribed burning, and/or grazing, treated areas may help reduce the threat of a large, catastrophic fire. Local experience shows that the treated areas will remain in the low fire hazard and in Condition Class 1 for a minimum of 5 to 10 years. Maintenance underburning would reduce the accumulation of needle, small limbs and other ground fuels that had accumulated since the original treatment, as well as to reduce the number of seedling conifers that became established, and to reduce the grasses and brush component. Targeted grazing will also be used to maintain implementation objectives in areas identified for the use of grazing.

The openness of crown fuels would create a network of intermingled openings between the clumps of large trees, the absence of excessive ladder fuels, and the low amount of surface fuel would produce safe conditions for maintenance underburning and a lower probability of sustained crown fire. There is very strong evidence of the effectiveness of this type of treatment (Omi and Martinson, 2002). It should be noted, however, that under the most extreme weather conditions a severe, stand replacing crown fire could still occur.

The non-treatment areas will continue to remain at risk, but the landscape will be changed with the proposed action to reduce damaging effects in the event of a wildfire. Wildfire suppression could be more effectively managed upon completion of the proposed action in the event of wildfire start in the untreated stands.

Proposed Action

The Carson Ranger District is proposing to treat up to 4,193 acres across the 12,060-acre planning area, using a suite of implementation tools, including: mechanical, prescribed fire, hand work, and targeted grazing. These different implementation tools are described in more detail below.

Based on current vegetation conditions, the Forest has identified specific areas to be treated. Treatment implementation would occur over several years, and some areas of this project would receive more than one entry for treatment, as well as using multiple methods in order to reach the desired objectives. For example, an area may be thinned to reduce ladder fuels, and then would be underburned using prescribed fire to reintroduce fire onto the landscape and maintain the desired fuel loading. In addition, areas within this analysis area are in need of maintenance from previous projects and will be analyzed as part of the proposed action. Figure 3 is a map showing areas where treatments would be focused.

The specific treatments and methods being considered for this project include:

- **Hand thinning:** This includes use of chainsaws to hand cut and pile, chip, or lop and scatter material. Material would then be burned in piles, chipped using a wheeled/tracked chipper, or lopped and scattered.
  - Manually cut conifers up to 14-inches diameter at breast height (DBH)
  - Manually cut brush species
  - Manually cut all brush and ladder fuels from underneath the drip line of leave trees
  - Manually cut hazard trees that pose an immediate danger to people working on the ground or that threaten life and property. Leave uncut logs/boles of these on the ground if they're greater than 14 inches in diameter
- **Mechanical Equipment:** This includes mechanical mastication of brush and small trees and mechanical thinning from below. Mechanical thinning would include the use of ground-based equipment to cut, yard, and process trees selected for removal through saw timber and commercial and personal use fuelwood contracts. This may require yarding felled trees. A masticator tracks on top of surface fuels as it shreds live vegetation and woody debris. Typically, masticators have a ground pressure of less than 6 PSI, depending on the type of machine being used.
  - Mastication specifications:
    - Masticate conifers up to 14-inches DBH
    - Mastication brush species
    - Masticate activity created slash, and existing dead and down surface fuels
    - Masticate on slopes 35% or less
  - Mechanical Thinning Specifications:
    - Conifer trees would be thinned and removed with ground-based equipment
    - Felled trees would be taken to identified processing locations

        - Slash from felled trees may be processed in the unit or at the landing, but all activity slash will be piled for burning at a later date, or chipped. Chips may be used on site for rehabilitation purposes, or hauled off site
        - Tree boles will be hauled offsite as either saw timber or commercial or personal use fuelwood
- **Prescribed Fire:** The purpose of prescribed burning treatments is to restore fire to the ecosystem, reduce dead and down fuels and vegetation, and dispose of accumulated hazardous fuels throughout the project area. The term "prescribed burning" includes hand pile, jack-pot, understory, and broadcast burning. Hand pile burning describes one or more hand piles burned collectively across a unit. Jack-pot burning is where irregularly shaped jack-pots, such as from lop and scatter, are ignited, resulting in a mosaic pattern. Understory burning is fire that is ignited under a forested canopy which typically results in a mosaic pattern of low to moderate intensity. Broadcast burning is a more general term to describe burning that is applied over all of the majority of an area, yielding varying fire intensities. Broadcast burning, for this project, is used to describe burning that would occur in primarily brush fields where the purpose it to have fire burn the upper canopy, as well as dead and down surface fuels.
    - Prescribed Burning Specifications:
        - Any prescribed fire would take place during the fall, winter, and spring months.
        - Burn hand piles in designated areas to reduce activity and existing surface fuels. Hand piles should be chunked enough so that at least 90 percent of the pile is consumed.
        - Utilize a combination of broadcast, understory, and jack-pot burning in areas where more continuous fuels exist. It may be necessary in some places to burn two or more consecutive years to reach desired conditions, to control understory vegetation, and/or to reduce subsequent fuels buildup from fire-induced mortality.
        - In areas with an overstory canopy, ignite fire that results in a mosaic burn pattern, primarily of low- to moderate-intensity surface fire with fire backing down slope into riparian areas.
        - In primarily brush fields, ignite fire that results in a mosaic burn pattern with varying intensities (low through high) leaving small islands, ranging in size, of untreated brush totaling approximately 5-10 percent of the area.
        - In order to prolong the benefits of proposed fuels treatments repeated maintenance would occur until conditions have changed enough to warrant a new decision document.
        - Maintenance burning, consisting of broadcast, understory, pile, and jackpot, could be utilized.
- **Targeted Grazing:** Includes using grazing animals (goats or sheep) for fine fuels reduction and maintenance of implemented treatments. Targeted grazing is the purposeful application of a specific species of livestock at a determined season, duration, and intensity to accomplish defined vegetation or landscape objectives (ASI 2006). Targeted grazing requires the use of livestock at a high intensity over a short duration to remove fine fuels. Schachtschneider (2016) found targeted grazing to be an effective tool at reducing flame lengths and rate of spread when shrub canopy cover was low; shrub cover appears to be the main driver of flame length and growth spread, particularly above 30 percent canopy cover.

    - Grazing fine fuels specifications:

- Targeted grazing may be utilized during the late winter, spring, and fall months to target fine Fuels to reduce fuel loading and seed head production. Grazing will be focused in areas dominated by annual grass with low shrub cover.
- Targeted grazing will be excluded from any areas recently planted or seeded and any other designated exclusion areas, such as archeological sites.
- Targeted grazing will not occur within all acres of the project area in any one season and would utilize active herding and features for implementation such as temporary water haul sites.
- Livestock watering locations for targeted grazing treatments will be limited to water haul sites located along or adjacent to roads and previously disturbed sites.
    - Water haul sites and mineral supplement locations (livestock attractants) will be located at least ¼ mile away from any riparian area
- Manage for a residual annual grass height (or "stubble height") of two inches or less (≤2 inches). The residual grass height objective of two inches or less is designed to address the annual variability in grass height and to significantly reduce fuel continuity in the dense, fine, flashy fuels.
- Browsing of mature shrubs will be limited to 40% utilization in non-bedding or watering sites.

o Targeted Grazing maintenance specifications

- More intense targeted grazing may be utilized during any season to maintain previously implemented treatments but will not occur on all acres of the project area in any one season.
- Brush and fine fuels will be targeted for treatment to maintain existing fuel breaks.
- Manage for a residual annual grass height (or "stubble height") of two inches or less (≤2 inches). The residual grass height objective of two inches or less is designed to address the annual variability in grass height and to significantly reduce fuel continuity in the dense, fine, flashy fuels.
- No more than 40% utilization (moderate use) of perennial grasses.
- Browsing of mature shrubs will be limited to 45% utilization in non-bedding or watering sites.
- Livestock watering locations for targeted grazing treatments will be limited to water haul sites located along or adjacent to roads and previously disturbed sites.
    - Water haul sites and mineral supplement locations (livestock attractants) will be located at least ¼ mile away from any riparian area.
- Targeted grazing will be excluded from any areas recently planted or seeded and any other designated exclusion areas, such as archeological sites.
- Temporary fencing of up to 5 acres may be necessary to focus targeted grazing in key areas and to protect. Temporary fencing would only be in place while targeted grazing is occurring and would be removed immediately following the treatment.

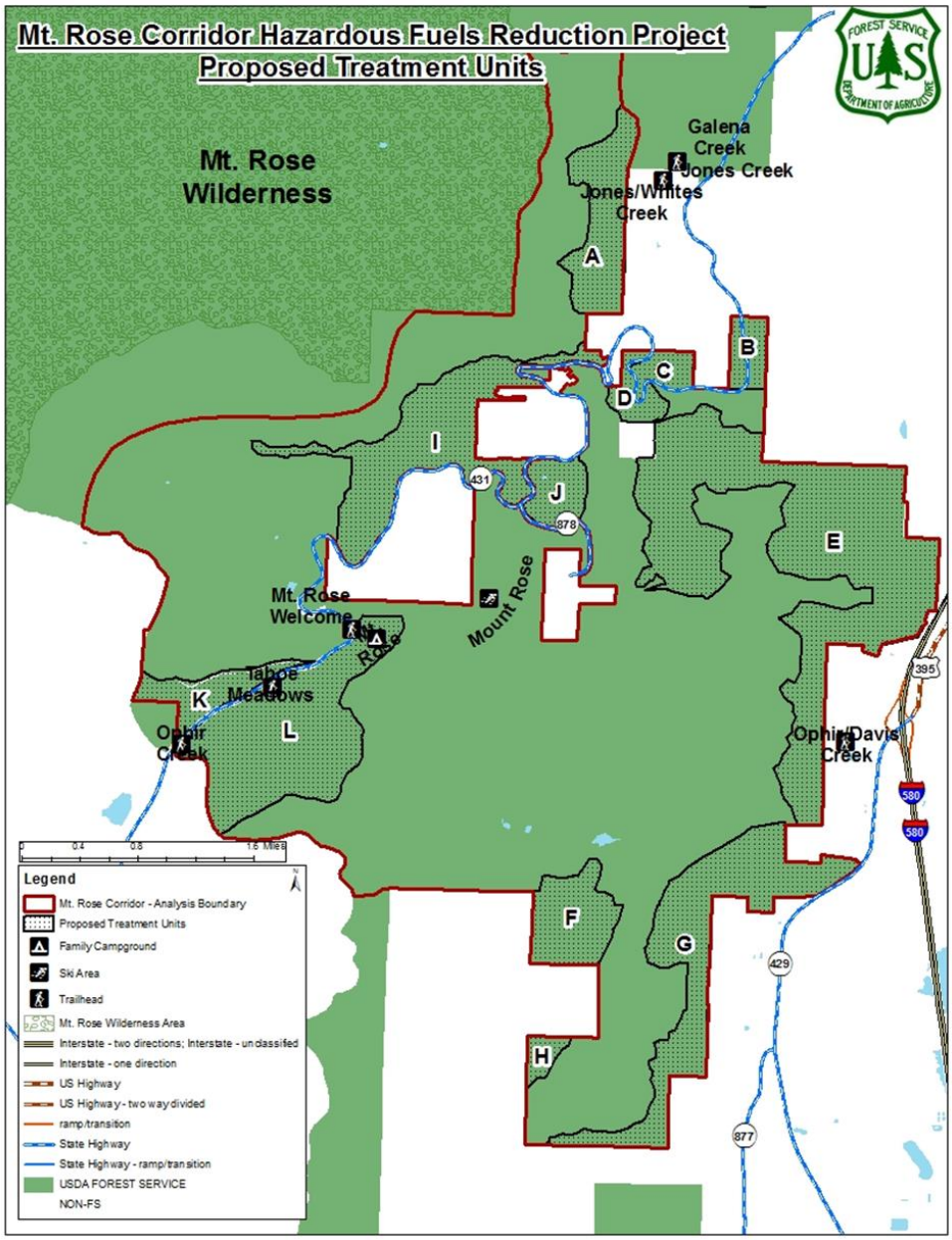

Figure 3: Mt. Rose Corridor Proposed Treatment Units

The Forest Service has identified potential treatments (Table 1) within the project area.

Table 1: Mt. Rose Corridor Project Treatment by Unit

Unit	Acres	Potential Treatments
A	279	• Equipment: Mastication, tractor logging and/or commercial fuelwood (yarding/skidding) • Handwork: Hand cutting and piling, chipping • Prescribed fire: Piles, understory • Grazing: Sheep/goats, maintenance of previous implementation. Would only occur north of Galena Creek.
B	80	• Equipment: Mastication • Handwork: Hand cutting and piling, chipping • Prescribed fire: Piles
C	63	• Equipment: Mastication • Handwork: Hand cutting and piling, chipping • Prescribed fire: Piles • Grazing: Sheep/goats, maintenance of previous implementation.
D	72	• Equipment: Mastication • Handwork: Hand cutting and piling, chipping • Prescribed fire: Piles, understory • Grazing: Sheep/goats, maintenance of previous implementation.
E	1378	• Equipment: Mastication, tractor logging and/or commercial fuelwood (yarding/skidding) • Handwork: Hand cutting and piling, chipping • Prescribed fire: Piles, understory • Grazing: Sheep/goats, maintenance of previous implementation. Would only occur north of Brown's Creek.
F	214	• Equipment: Mastication, tractor logging and/or commercial fuelwood (yarding/skidding) • Handwork: Hand cutting and piling, chipping • Prescribed fire: Piles, understory
G	593	• Equipment: Mastication, tractor logging and/or commercial fuelwood (yarding/skidding) • Handwork: Hand cutting and piling, chipping • Prescribed fire: Piles, understory
H	41	• Equipment: Mastication, tractor logging and/or commercial fuelwood (yarding/skidding) • Handwork: Hand cutting and piling, chipping • Prescribed fire: Piles, understory
I	555	• Equipment: Mastication, tractor logging and/or commercial fuelwood (yarding/skidding) • Handwork: Hand cutting and piling, chipping, lopping and scattering • Prescribed fire: Piles, understory
J	110	• Equipment: Mastication, tractor logging and/or commercial fuelwood (yarding/skidding) • Handwork: Hand cutting and piling, chipping, lopping and scattering • Prescribed fire: Piles, understory
K	138	• Equipment: Mastication, tractor logging and/or commercial fuelwood (yarding/skidding) • Handwork: Hand cutting and piling, chipping, lopping and scattering • Prescribed fire: Piles, understory
L	670	• Equipment: Mastication, tractor logging and/or commercial fuelwood (yarding/skidding) • Handwork: Hand cutting and piling, chipping, lopping and scattering • Prescribed fire: Piles, understory

Design Elements

This section describes how resource conditions could modify treatment areas or describe conditions where activities may be adjusted, limited or excluded. Design elements, also called design features or

design criteria, were developed based on issues or concerns generated from internal and external sources. Some design elements would be applied to distinct areas or treatment units; others are designed to be applied to all treatments and areas. Design elements are used in addition to best management practices (BMPs) to minimize potential impacts to resources from project activities. Table 2 below describes the design elements that would be applied to the proposed action and activities.

Table 2: Mt. Rose Corridor Design Elements

Design Element ***Describe how the action needs to be modified to address an issue.***	**Activity** *Which activity needs to be modified? All, prescribed burning, other connected actions?*	**Where?** ***What is the applicable area (geographic features, forest times, management areas, etc)***
Heritage Resources		
There are 36 historic properties within the proposed treatment areas of the Mt. Rose Fuels Reduction Project analysis area. Flag and avoid all historic properties unless otherwise agreed upon by the District Archaeologist.	Implementation	All Treatment Units
Work proposed within the boundaries of historic properties may only occur with written approval from the District Archaeologist.	Implementation	Where cultural resources are present
An archaeological monitor must be present to observe and direct activities taking place within the boundaries of any historic property.	Implementation	Where cultural resources are present
All activity generated fuel must be removed from the site boundaries unless agreed upon by the District Archaeologist (e.g., if fuel loading is very low and won't result in additional heating of artifacts and/or features susceptible to fire related heat damage).	Implementation	Where cultural resources are present
There are 8 historic properties located within or immediately adjacent to areas planned for targeted grazing. Prior to commencement of seasonal	Targeted Grazing	Portions of Units A, C, D and E

grazing, the Forest Service Contract Administrators and Cultural Resource Specialist will meet with the contractor and the herder to discuss the management requirements and share site locational data. The sites will be flagged at the contractor's request.		
All watering and bedding locations must be located at least 200 meters away from historic properties.	Targeted Grazing	Portions of Units A, C, D and E
Herders will be instructed to "push" sheep away from historic properties to avoid grazing over the sites.	Targeted Grazing	Portions of Units A, C, D and E
Twenty-five percent of the sites must be monitored after the herd has left the contract area to ensure effectiveness of the management requirements. A different set of sites will be monitored each season of grazing.	Targeted Grazing	Portions of Units A, C, D and E
If the proposed management requirements for targeted grazing do not appear successful or possible, the historic properties will be subjected to other mitigations such as temporary fencing.	Targeted Grazing	Portions of Units A, C, D and E
If the Forest Service determines that a historic property has been damaged, the Forest will halt all activities that could result in further damage to the historic property and will notify SHPO and any affected tribes concerning proposed actions to mitigate adverse effects.	Implementation	All treatment Units
Soils/Hydrology		
Ground-based equipment would operate on slopes less than 35% (30% on decomposed granite soils), except for pitches of 150 feet or less.	Mechanical Implementation Units	All Units

No trees will be removed where they provide stream bank stability.	Implementation	All Units
Ground-based equipment will stay on established stream crossings.	Mechanical Implementation Units	All Units
Skid trails would be designated on ground-based skidding units. Skid trails will be designed to minimize soil disturbance and potential erosion.	Mechanical Implementation Units	Units A, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L
Rehabilitation of skid trails and landings may include ripping, seeding, and waterbar construction. Temporary roads would be obliterated. Native seed mix would be used during project rehabilitation efforts.	Mechanical Implementation Units	Units A, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L
Equipment exclusion zones would be established for both seasonal and perennial streams to protect streambank stability and water quality. Equipment exclusions zones would be established within 50 feet of a seasonal stream and 100 feet of perennial streams.	Mechanical Implementation Units	Units A, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L
Prescribed fires may back into riparian vegetation areas; avoid direct lighting within riparian vegetation.	Prescribed Fire	All Units
Designate bedding and watering sites ¼ mile away from streams and riparian areas.	Targeted Grazing	Units A, C, D E
Weeds		
Known infestations of priority weed species (Category A-C, NDA) including yellow star thistle and medusahead would be avoided by project activities to prevent spread.	Implementation	All Units
Treatment areas will be monitored annually for noxious weeds or invasive species for a minimum of 3 years after treatment.	Implementation	All Units

Consider implementation practices for fuels reduction that minimize the introduction and spread of invasive weeds.	Mechanical Implementation Units	All Units
Botany		
Known occurrences of Threatened, Endangered, Proposed and Region 4 Forest Service Sensitive (TEPS), and other Rare Plant Species will be flagged by the botanist assigned to the project and avoided by project activities, unless specific alternative guidelines are established by the Forest or District Botanist to mitigate potential impacts.	Implementation	All Units
New occurrences of threatened, endangered, proposed, or sensitive plant species discovered before or during project implementation would be flagged by the botanist assigned to the project and avoided by project activities, unless specific alternative guidelines are established by the Forest or District Botanist to mitigate potential impacts.	Implementation	All Units
Vegetation		
Whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) would be retained during implementation of treatments to the greatest extent possible. Individuals and small groups of whitebark pine trees may be removed if disease or insect activity is present. Disturbance associated with accessing units, staging, and treatments would be minimized where whitebark pine occurs	Implementation	Units I, J, K, and L
Any Plus trees identified within the treatment units will be retained. Plus trees in this project are either Whitebark pine (*Pinus albacaulis*) or	Implementation	Unit I, J, K, L

Western White pine (*Pinus monticola*), and have been tested and show signed of genetic resistance to White Pine Blister Rust.		
Skid trails would be designated on ground based skidding units and located so damage to the residual stand is minimized. Multiple pass skid trails would be located a minimum of 75 feet apart except where they converge at landings.	Mechanical Implementation Units	Units A, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L
Temporary roads would be obliterated; skid trails and landings would be rehabilitated.	Mechanical Implementation Units	Units A, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L
Where feasible, whole tree yarding, with limbs and tops attached, would be utilized to minimize burn intensity and reduce surface fuels.	Mechanical Implementation Units	Units A, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L
Wildlife		
Within the identified 2-acre Flammulated Owl PAC, no activities between April 1st - October 31st.	Implementation	Unit I
Within identified Flammulated Owl habitat (PODS), no activities between May 1st- August 30th. Altered vegetation treatments will be implemented to maintain desired habitat characteristics.	Implementation	Unit F
No treatment to occur within 500 ft of the identified Flammulated Owl nest.	Implementation	Unit I – Within Flammulated Owl PAC
A limited operating period will be implemented for a portion of Unit G if active bald eagle nesting is occurring	Implementation	Unit G
No treatment within a 150' buffer around all mountain beaver complexes.	Implementation	Units I and J
Recreation		
Where treatments are necessary, decrease intensity of	Implementation	All Units

treatments along trails to reduce short term effects to the recreation experience, and discourage off trail use. Where feasible leave down woody material and brush along trails to reduce off trail travel proliferation of social trails.		
As much as possible hide evidence of treatments such as cuts, fire lines, evidence of motorized equipment, tire tracks, etc. in areas visible from trails.	Implementation	All Units
Protect all improvements and facilities such as trails, boardwalks, and signs.	Implementation	All Units
Skidding may be done to cross the trail at locations approved by the recreation staff.	Implementation	Units with System Trails
Techniques include raking, covering cuts with dirt, cut any stumps flush to the ground, returning fire lines to natural grade, cover ground disturbance such as fire lines with needles or woody material. As much as possible retain the natural appearance of treatment areas near these trails.	Implementation	Units with System Trails
It is preferred that trails be used as fire lines rather than constructing new line in areas visible from trails. If trails are used as fire lines, return woody debris (if available) to the edge of the trail to minimize off trail use and development of social trails. If trails are widened or trenched to make more effective fire lines, return the trail to original width or less than 30" and fill trenched areas / construct water bars to prevent erosion.	Implementation	Units with System Trails

Limit motor vehicle travel on these trails and hide or repair evidence of motor vehicle use associated with the project.	Implementation	Units with System Trails
Treatment in areas that are visible from system trails including Jones / Whites Creek, Tahoe Rim Trail, Tahoe Meadows Interpretive trail, and Ophir Creek would be coordinated with Recreation staff to ensure limited disturbance to trails.	Implementation	Units A, E, L
No operations on weekends that have recreation events. Check with recreation staff for events permitted.	Implementation	All Units

Preliminary Resources of Concern

This summary of potential effects highlights what may occur through implementation of the proposed action (see Table 3, below). The statements below are based on preliminary review and analysis from the interdisciplinary team and provide information on potential effects of the proposed action. These effects of the proposed action will be analyzed and displayed in the EA, in addition to other potential effects on resources that may be identified during the scoping and analysis process.

Table 1: Resources to be Addressed in the EA.

Affected Resource	**Summary of Potential Impacts**
Biological Resources	Vegetation management and fuels reduction activities may result in short term effects to upland, riparian, and aquatic habitats and the associated rare plant, and wildlife populations. Direct impacts from project activities may include disturbance to forest sensitive species, and other species of concern and their habitats. Indirect impacts may include habitat alteration, such as a reduction or change in vegetation cover; species composition; the introduction and spread of noxious and invasive weed species; and reductions in water availability and quality.
Cultural Resources	Vegetation management and fuels reduction activities may affect cultural resource sites. Impacts on cultural sites comes from compaction of soils, reduced vegetation, and crushing/trampling, which increase soil erosion and cause the movement and transportation of artifacts away from sites. Section 106 under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended, requires federal agencies such as the US Forest Service to identify and consider potential effects of its actions on historic properties. This is done through a collaborative framework of seeking, discussing, and considering views of the public on how potential adverse effects on historic properties resulting from a proposed Federal action should be addressed. The HTNF will be using this NEPA scoping process in lieu of public involvement requirements found in 36 CFR Part 800, the regulations implementing Section 106 of the NHPA (54 U.S.C. 306108).

Soil and Water Resources	Vegetation management and fuels reduction activities may affect water and soil quality in several ways. Loss of effective ground cover in the uplands may increase overland flow and soil erosion. Soil compaction and the loss of ground cover and plant vigor in riparian areas can decrease the ability of riparian areas to filter pollutants and function as a floodplain. The stream systems within and in the vicinity of the treatment units carry runoff and spring flows to receiving waterbodies downstream. Via the potential effects on soils, plant cover, wetlands, and riparian areas discussed above, implementation activities could potentially have a number of negative and positive effects. These effects make water quality an indicator of the overall watershed health that this analysis addresses. Activities under the proposed action, reflecting forest plan and other management direction, would preclude notable adverse impacts; however, there is the potential for adverse impacts to wetlands, riparian areas, and other aquatic habitats. Design elements built into the proposed action would aim to reduce potential impacts.
Public Health and Safety	Vegetation management and fuels reduction activities have the potential to affect public health and safety. Temporary area and route closures would be implemented to provide for public safety during treatment operations due to the presence of fire activity, smoke, mechanical equipment, and falling trees/snags. Signs would be posted as would a notification through public media. In addition, no treatment activities would take place on private lands or lands outside the jurisdiction of the Forest Service. As necessary, area closures may be enforced to provide for public safety.
Air Quality	Vegetation management and fuels reduction activities would affect air quality through emissions from machinery use and smoke from prescribed fires. The Washoe County Air Quality Management Division is the local agency responsible for enforcement of air quality regulations in the project area. Prescribed fires are subject to permitting by Washoe County Air Quality. For each prescribed fire, the Forest Service will have contingency plans identified to reduce smoke emissions. Contingency plans shall be implemented when the Washoe County Air Quality determines that acceptance limits of smoke are exceeded, and/or the Forest Service anticipates that the prescription for a prescribed fire will be exceeded.
Recreation	Vegetation management and fuels reduction activities have the potential to affect recreation in areas of the project where recreationists or recreation areas are likely to be in close proximity – including trails, trailheads, and dispersed camping areas. Additionally, during mechanical and fire treatments, the public access to the treatment areas would be prohibited until the Forest Service deems sites safe for public use. Potential effects on the recreation experience include the sights, sounds, ground disturbance, smoke from fire, and visual evidence of implementation activities along trails or in dispersed camping areas. The proposed action has been designed to avoid conflicts with recreation to the extent possible.

Comment Process

This project is subject to comment pursuant to 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B. Only those who submit timely project-specific written comments during a public comment period are eligible to file an objection. Individuals or representatives of an entity submitting comments must sign the comments or verify identify upon request and must meet the requirements of 36 CFR 218, Subparts A and B.

The Forest Service will accept comments on this proposal for 30 days following the publication of the legal notice in the Reno Gazette Journal, which is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this analysis. Commenters should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. It is the commentor's responsibility to ensure timely receipt of comments (36 CFR 218.25).

We request that you submit your comments online at https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=58030. Use the "Comment on Project" link on the "Get Connected" menu tab on the right side of the page.

Attachments to comments must be submitted only in one of the following three formats: Microsoft Word, rich text format (rtf), or Adobe Portable Document format (pdf). Emails submitted to email addresses other than the one listed above or in other formats than those listed or containing viruses will be rejected. Comments received in response to this initial request, including names, addresses, and any other information provided with the comments, will be considered a part of the public record and will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act and released if requested.

If you are not able to access the online form, comments may also be submitted by regular mail to Matthew Zumstein, Re: Mt Rose Fuels Project, Carson Ranger District Ranger; 1536 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada 89701 or by fax at (775) 884-8199.

In cases where no identifiable name is attached to a comment, a verification of identity will be required for objection eligibility. If using an electronic message, a scanned signature is one way to provide verification. Names of commenters will be part of the public record subject to the Freedom of Information Act.

For additional information, contact Annabelle Monti at (775) 884-8103 or annabelle.monti@usda.gov.

Next Steps

As noted above, work will continue through the drafting and release of the preliminary EA. If, as the analysis progresses, no potential for significant impacts are identified, that finding, along with the EA and a proposed decision, will be sent to those who commented during the comment period. If the analysis concludes that there is the potential for significant impacts, then the Forest Service will prepare an environmental impact statement.

Staying Involved

Public involvement throughout this analysis is important, and the public has various ways to stay informed. First, you can ask to be added to the mailing list for this project, and you will receive periodic updates and mailings about the project.

Second, you can add yourself to our email notification list, and you will receive emails with updates and project information. To subscribe to this system, you may go to this link: https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=58030. Once at the project site, you will see a box titled "Get Connected" on the right-hand side of the page. In the box is a "Subscribe to Email Updates" menu item. When you click on that item you will be prompted to provide your email address and select a password. When you have logged in, you will be able to manage your account by subscribing to projects by forest, district, project type, or project purpose. You will also be able to change your email address and password or delete subscriptions for projects you no longer wish to follow, or that have been completed.